DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 776 FL 018 827

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TITLE Women's Conversational Culture: Rupturing Patriarchal Discourse. Rolig-Papir 36.
INSTITUTION Roskilde Univ. Center (Denmark).
REPORT NO ISSN-0106-0821
PUB DATE Sep 85
NOTE 23p.
AVAILABLE FROM ROLIG, Roskilde Universitetscenter, hus 21.2, Postbox 260, DK-4000, Roskilde, Denmark.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Broadcast Journalism; Discourse Analysis; *Females; Foreign Countries; *Interpersonal Communication; *Interviews; *Language Patterns; *Language Styles; *Sex Differences; Sex Role; Television
IDENTIFIERS *Turn Taking

ABSTRACT

Patterns in the speech behavior of women were examined in a number of mixed-sex and single-sex television interviews and discussions, focusing on response to male dominance. Common properties of women's speech style are attributed to their need to respond to the requirements of conversation with men and ensure conversational survival, and are seen as conversational competencies. These properties, which include turn-taking and joining responses, deferential behavior, personal or semantic reference, protecting the opponent from loss of face, and making the opponent's response or agreement easier, are discussed as they occurred in mixed-sex and single-sex conversations and in conversations between individuals of different status, age, or political position. It is proposed that analysis of the patterns occurring in mixed-sex conversations can serve to make speakers aware of the male domination of discourse, and analysis of women's conversations can make women more aware of their competence, both processes rupturing the patriarchal quality of discourse. (MSE)

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ISSN 0106-0821

ROLIG papir

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Trömel-Plötz

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36 85

Roskilde UniversitetsCenter
Lingvistgruppen

FL018827

ISSN 0106-0821

ROLIG-papir 36
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This ROLIG paper is the text of Senta Trömel-Plötz' lecture at Roskilde University's Center for Women Studies (Kvinder på tværs) on September 26, 1985

There are three levels on which disturbances and ruptures are being brought by women into ordinary discourse which is the discourse of men:

1) language is being attacked as patriarchal (in Switzerland recently a woman politician, Dr. Ursula Koch, changed Vaterland to Mutterland in her official oath of office and added und Bürgerinnen to Bürger wherever it occurred - she had to retract these changes, but the attack had its impact;

2) conversations are being shown to be male-dominated and male-controlled and

3) linguistics is being criticized as the male science of male speakers; its models are faulty and need revision; new concepts are being introduced.

My work[1] of the last six years or so has been mainly on the second and third level. I first of all looked at two mixed-sex TV-discussions (cf [2],[3]). I had the hypothesis that women show different verbal behaviour from men because they are treated differently in conversations than men are treated. In order to examine this hypothesis I paired the three women in the two discussions each with one man of equal or similar professional achievement, age, prestige, i.e. of roughly equal social status. Then I compared their verbal behaviour and the verbal treatment they received from other speakers. I found much support for my hypothesis, e.g. in the pair of high-status politicians the woman got 6 out of her 7 turns through self-selection, one by being called upon by the moderator. The man got 3 out of his 8 turns by self-selection, 5 turns by the moderator. This different behaviour, the woman being twice as active as the man, is necessary because the moderator does not formally give the floor to the woman until she threatens to leave the discussion. In the pair of young journalists the woman makes 11 attempts to get a turn of which 1 is successful, the man makes 5 attempts of which 4 are successful. Here again the greater conversational activity of the woman is necessary because of the reactions of the other speakers, mainly the moderators but also her colleagues, who ignore her attempts at speaking. She has to work twice as much as the man achieving

only a fourth of his success.

Both these factors have, of course, consequences on the content side of the discussion, on the different degree of concentration with which women and men can pursue the topic of discussion. It is clear that success as a speaker - conversational status - is being constructed differently for women and men. This can be shown most clearly by the category: self-termination of a turn. By terminating someone else's turns through overlapping or interrupting, the length of speaking-time up to near silence can be constructed and thus the ineffectiveness of a speaker. The two high-status women in my discussions each finish only 1 out of their 7 and 5 turns respectively. For the rest of their turns other speakers decide when they have said enough. The men in the pairs finish 5 out of 8 and 3 out of 6 turns themselves.

One last example: there is an instance in one discussion where the woman and the man journalist produce almost an identical utterance:

F: dürft' ich vielleicht auch noch schneli
M: wenn ich da auch grad noch dürft' eingreifen vielleicht -

These questions have the function of asking the moderator for permission to talk. In the case of the woman, the moderator answers by giving permission:

M: Ja, noch ein Schlusswort

whereas in the case of the man he is silent and lets him continue. This means identical utterances are heard differently when coming from a woman - she is asking for a turn - he is taking a turn. In the case of the woman a double incompetence is produced by the moderator: she has to ask for permission to talk and she does not succeed in self-selection but has to be given the turn.

In working at this hypothesis I came to use such concepts as conversational activity, conversational competence, conversational success and conversational status. I saw that conversational activity and conversational competence in women do

not guarantee them conversational success. For the women in the pairs a lower conversational status is constructed in the course of the discussions than is due to them, given their professional and social status and their conversational work expended in the discussions. I could show that, in the 2nd discussion, for two low-status men (one conversationally inactive, the other active) a higher conversational status is constructed than for the high-status woman. In a scale taking in such aspects as interruption, self-selection, self-termination, number of turns, length of turns, all men exceed the two women.

Why is it that professional status and competence, prestige, extreme conversational activity, does not bring them success ? Their energy is expended in creating for themselves a space to talk and to defend it against violations. They are forced into lower positions in the discussions by men not giving them a chance to talk, by men disregarding what they say when they do get a chance, by men not taking them seriously as equal participants in the discussion. Women have fewer conversational rights than men - e.g. the right to finish a turn, the right to be not disturbed while speaking, etc. Those that have more rights, more power, can more easily be successful. Success is constructed for the more powerful and not for the most able.

Once I saw this relationship: that the way women speak is a necessary and rational response to the requirements of the concrete conversational conditions, other properties of women's speech could be explained, e.g. why women address men more by name or why they use phonological variants closer to the standard than men. I want to just mention here Trudgill's very unsatisfactory and patriarchal explanation for hypercorrection among women. He says women in contrast to men are getting their status by how they appear, not by what they are. This assumes one, that women are nothing (the patriarchal part) and it does not explain why they want to appear to be more than what they are. Why do they have to correct how they appear? What do they have to correct if everything is fair in the attribution of status ?

Status cannot just be self-attributed, it has to be ratified

by others. If - as is my hypothesis - a lower status is produced for women in every interaction than is appropriate for them, then it is plausible that they want to influence and correct that construction in advance. They aim at a higher status so that at least they come out of an interaction with the status they should have. Men, in contrast, enter interactions with the male status bonus, their status can only increase and so they can well afford to use forms of lesser prestige.

The properties of women's speech are strategic measures developed and learned to insure conversational survival. I want to talk about one such strategy which I call joining. If women get fewer chances to talk and are less heard as I could show in the discussions, one technique for them to talk nevertheless and perhaps give weight to what they say, is to join men in what they say and then using and exploiting this technique to develop their own position. This is in fact what was done by the young woman, member of the Zürich youth movement, in my 2nd discussion. She has 15 turns in this discussion (the average number of turns per speaker being 8), all self-selected since she never formally got a turn through the moderator. Most of them she gets by joining her male colleage or by ironically joining her adversaries.
I differentiate 4 types of joining responses:

1) conventional joining (the yes, but technique)
2) joining the form (the yes, and technique)
3) joining the content (the yes, I agree technique)
4) ironical joining

I will only talk here about the fourth form because it is the most subversive and the most effective in a context of controversy.

Joining another speaker means agreeing, accepting what was said, saying the same thing. In ironical joinings objections and contradictions are camouflaged and packaged as joinings. By this disguise a turn may get a start and even continue for a while until the manoeuver is discovered and the speaker interrupted. By then something unexpected and provocative may have

been said.

Example:

F^1: I am clever enough to see through the game you are playing.

F^2: Oh, I'm convinced that you are very clever.

I found two functions of ironical joining as used by F^2:
1) when it occurs within the turn of another speaker it serves the purpose of disturbance and irritation.
Thus F^2 is intercepting such agreement markers as

yes, o.k.
yes, of course
quite right
correct

in an opponent's turn confusing her to such a degree that she stops to ask about F^2's position. This way F^2 gets a turn at talking. Here the pragmatic function of minimal responses - showing hearer's participation and ratification - is exploited in order to stop another speaker in her or his turn and get one's own turn.
2) when it occurs turn-initially, it has the function of securing a turn by pretending to accept what has been said and then exploiting the opportunity at a turn.

Interestingly I found two occurences of ironical joining by men in this discussion but in another position and with another function. Both men used ironical joining inside their own turns when they were in trouble. Both of them quickly paid a compliment to a woman:

what Mrs. X said is a very interesting point

and then continued with their own points.

A few general remarks about joining. When I first talked about this concept at the X. World Congress in Sociology in Mexico City, 1982, I heard from American linguists that several feminist researchers in investigating women's speech had at the same time come up with similar concepts, calling them

linking remarks etc. It seems to be an important property of women's style. But also more generally, on the level of texts, some concept like joining is necessary to explain the difference between a discourse of solidarity (where understanding and consensus are produced) and a discourse of controversy and conflict. We are in fact now investigating the difference between conversation and discussion (Streitgespräch) and between conversation and interview in terms of the presence or absence of joinings.

There is another interesting aspect of joining that came up in a conversation between a woman interviewer and Fritjof Capra. The woman formulated the utterances at the ends of her turns such that joinings of the content by Capra were possible. Almost all of his turns start out by accepting and corroborating what she said by yes, and and then get extended into an autonomous contribution. The woman could be said to produce prospective joinings.

On the pragmatic level joining may be a helpful concept in explaining what speech act sequences are possible. Speech acts of a joining kind might be an interesting class. On the semantic level the concept may help with the question what it means to "say the same", agree with someone or support someone. Are the two utterances paraphrases, continuations or extensions ?

Before I came to do feminist linguistics I was working on psychotherapeutic discourse.[2] It turns out that joining is a psychotherapeutic technique used in all forms of therapy to get therapeutic change (cf. [22], [23], [24], [25]). Therapists are careful to accept some part of what the patients say to make it possible and easier for them to accept something new and something difficult. Of course, in order to be able to join, one has to be a good listener. Thus psychotherapists and women are considered to be competent listeners. It looks as though women had picked a strategy that allows them to say something where it is difficult to get a word in and allows them to get a point across in a situation of extreme resistance.

Joining is a rational response where it is difficult to stay in the conversation and even more difficult to have people accept something of what we say. There are other similarities between women's speech and psychotherapeutic interventions. I will mention two more later. But first I want to continue with the chronological order of my research questions. From seeing a similarity like the one mentioned above, with the psychotherapeutic manoeuvre being evaluated as highly competent and the same manoeuvre when performed by women as parroting, submissive, having nothing to say of their own, there was only a small step to investigating women's strategic behaviour as competence. The place to look at women's verbal competence was not mixed-sex conversations, a power context where what they did could be seen as gestures of submission following power gestures by men, but women's conversations, a context of solidarity, where women's speech could be seen as cooperative, supportive, fair, humane.

So the next questions was: do women talk differently from men when they are on their own and do they still talk differently than men do when they have contrary political positions ?

I analysed two further TV discussions, one between four women, including the woman moderator, and one man, the other between the same woman moderator and four woman participants. Both of them turned out to be quite different from the two previous mixed-sex discussions. I can mention only a few points. A striking difference was that in the women's discussions no one dominated as to number of turns and length of speaking time (in contrast to male discussions where the most powerful speaks the most) and that the atmosphere of conversation was pleasant and calm, even peaceful.

Our first question in the analysis of the 1st discussion (cf. [3]) were: how did the women produce the equality, understanding, agreement and the peaceful atmosphere. There was after all a natural hierarchy among the four women and the man, given their different functions, age, achievement, social status, experience with the medium TV, and sex. How did they produce an equal ranking among each other ? The answer is that the more

powerful share their power and the less powerful empower themselves. Thus the moderator who has power because of her function gives up a large part of that power by not calling upon people but letting them self-select their turns. She does that from the very start when she puts a question to the group without giving a turn to someone particular. No one quickly self-selects herself or himself and the moderator just waits. An 8-second pause is produced by everybody, showing mutual respect for the participants and for the onlookers. Yielding power by itself is not sufficient if the others do not take the power for themselves. But this is done the two younger women, they self-select and then the older high-status woman has a turn, again two women self-select, and only then the man takes his first turn. The hierarchies of old before young, high position before low position, men before women, are dissolved. During the entire one-hour discussion the moderator distributes only four turns and surely without her conscious knowledge exactly one to each participant. There are hardly any interruptions, no overlaps (versus 17 and 22 interruptions in the two male discussions), no disturbances while one is talking, thus producing an atmosphere where the rights of everyone are guaranteed and where therefore concentration on content is possible.

Furthermore, understanding is produced by sharing emotions and by producing common content. This is done by again and again referring back to what was said and to who said it. Especially the high-status woman explicitly joins the woman of lowest status thus giving her acknowledgement and respect. This is doubled by granting the longest total speaking time to the lowest-status woman and by giving her the highest number of minimal responses while she is speaking, i.e. a higher conversational status is being produced for her, making her more equal with the other participants. The references with personal pronouns and names addressing the other speakers also give support and acknowledgement to them, taking up their topics, adding new aspects, developing a topic. The conversation flows.

I want to mention a striking asymmetry here between the verbal behaviour of the women and the one man who is participating. The women are generous with their personal references, they give as much or more than they receive. The man is the only one who lets himself be spoiled by references but does not give as many back as he receives:

		active	passive
F^1	(Krattiger)	7	7
F^2	(Bausch)	6	4
F^3	(Bührig)	6	5
M	(Bommer)	4	7

This also happens with respect to supportive minimal responses: 150 in all are given during the discussion, 3 of them by the man. 75 are produced while the man is talking, 20 while F^1 and F^3, 30 while F^2 is talking (thus raising her status), 5 while the moderator is talking.

Minimal responses, giving support while someone is talking is highly automatic. Women habitually give more of that support to men, men do not reciprocate. This asymmetry is visible also in the speech acts used: women give explicit agreement, indirect compliments, positive evaluation to the man, he does not return these; instead he modifies, corrects, objects, presents for consideration and, of course, knows the "objective truth".

But I want to mention a few observations on the fourth discussion, which was on women's participation in the civilian defence. Two women with extremely contrary political positions argued on each side, and there was a woman moderator. My hypothesis was that if women talk differently from men, they will also argue differently than men do. Their competence will also show up in the context of an argument.

We found that, although there was more structuring by the moderator than in the 3rd discussion, she still allowed more self-selections than she did alloting of turns, i.e. she

yielded moderator power. The two high-status women on both sides also yielded some of their power to the younger women, e.g. by letting them interrupt them, thus not insisting on their authority and status. They also supported the younger women by joining then and by withholding reproach and criticism when it would have been appropriate. The women talked more personally, making themselves open for attack, and especially they talked more directly with each other on the issues. This was achieved by

1) direct semantic reference to what an opponent had said, frequently taking up the wording even or giving a summary of what the opponent had said. These references then are either followed by a joining or by a precise delimitation of the two positions. Joining and delimiting show precisely where the conflict is;

2) direct personal reference among the opponents by addressing each other, often by name, or mentioning them. This shows the respect these give each other. They speak with each other as persons, not just about content and abstracting from the persons and their emotions. In this way it is in fact possible to work at the conflict and not just pit opinions against opinions. What is being constructed is a fair conversation with the speakers not using the weaknesses of others, without personal attacks, with an atmosphere of protection instead. It is not a conversational duel, a verbal fight, but in spite of the stereotype of the argumentative women what we call "ein sachliches Gespräch" (factual, objective). Especially the two older women do not use their greater knowledge to dominate the younger women on the opposite side. They take what they say seriously, no matter whether it is aggressive, inappropriate in tone or ill-founded as to the subject matter.

This seems to me to be an important property of women's speech style. It was noted that women use more modifications which reduce the certainty with which something is stated. The interpretation was that women are insecure and hesitant about what they want to say. In this discussion I found multiple weakening modifications of attacks, accusations and contradictions with

the function of protecting the opponent from face-loss. Such protection is effective on the level of the relationship, it guarantees that the conversation can go on because the relationship is not seriously hurt or harmed. Such a mechanism is therefore especially important in a situation where there is controversy on the content level. Of course, such modifications may have other functions besides, e.g. demonstrating what is the right tone, indirectly correcting what has been said or how it was said, teaching a better way of speaking, an inverse topping of a rude remark by an extremely polite response. So far from being a deficiency, using these modifications is a special competence.

Having arrived at seeing properties of women's speech as competences it is interesting to pursue them further in different communication situations.

During the last year we have been looking at TV-conversations between two people and four such conversations are being analyzed in detail by students of mine in their MA theses. We are comparing a female and a male journalist both interviewing Fritjof Capra, showing that while the man constructs the interview as a fight for dominance by trying to devalue Capra, the woman produces not only a pleasant but a more informative conversation where we can learn something about Capra's ideas. The first interview demonstrates how much work and energy is necessary when conversation is conceived as competition; all the attacks, negative evaluations, destructive criticism, wrong presuppositions in the male journalist's contributions have to be undone, overcome, corrected, refused by Capra. The attempted construction of incompetence has to be turned into something positive. In the conversation with the woman journalist who respects Capra and constructs his competence, who does not use him to enlarge her own image (she takes 1/10 of the total speaking time, the male journalist speaks half as much as Capra), Capra can concentrate on issues, information can flow and learning can take place.

We also compare two other conversations, again keeping one

speaker constant. This time it is a woman, Alice Schwarzer, best known of all German feminists. She talks with Rudolf Augstein, editor of DER SPIEGEL in a recent broadcast and with Esther Vilar in 1975.

I want to close with talking about two properties of Schwarzer's style that are particularly striking. The first is the property already mentioned above, the modification of certain speech acts to protect the other person from face-loss.
In this discussion there are 60 instances of this strategy falling into about 6 different types and having one feature in common: they depersonalize what is being said. This result I owe to Birgit Kienzle[3], a student of mine, who calls the concept, following Brown/Levinson, "Entpersönlichungsstrategien", strategies of impersonalization.
Some examples:

Schwarzer formulates:

> Gibt es denn da nicht so etwas wie eine Koketterie eines arrivierten Journalisten, in den Dialog mit den Mächtigen einzutreten?

instead of saying

> Sie kokettieren mit den Mächtigen.

Different sorts of modifications are being used here: questions form, nominalization: es gibt die Koketterie, restriction: so etwas wie die Koketterie, generalization: eines Journalisten, all of it topped off by a compliment: eines arrivierten Journalisten. All of these mechanisms serve the purpose of minimalizing the direct personal attack and allow Augstein to react positively to the topic which in fact he does:

> May be, may be that you see it this way, I didn't see it that way then.

When Schwarzer says:

> Da waren Sie nicht der einzige Mann, der versagt hat.

instead of:

> Sie haben versagt.

or:

> You are one of the men who profit from the way things are between women and men.

instead of:

> You profit from the way....

she is weakening her personal attacks on Augstein by extending them to other men. Thus she is making it easier for Augstein to answer as an arbitrary representative of a larger class.

In the same way she is protecting his image when she says:

> Die Auseinandersetzung mit uns hat jeglichen Niveaus gemangelt

instead of:

> Sie haben sich mit mir ohne jedes Niveau auseinandergesetzt.

The second property has a similar function: making it easier for the addressee to respond and possibly get her or him to accept something of what is said.

This is packing the criticism in compliments, approval, commendation. There are several occasions where Schwarzer, before she explicitly states a criticism, preposes, intercepts and postposes compliments; the stronger the criticism, the more compliments are interspersed, sometimes she gets so involved in them that she loses the syntax of the critical statement. Interestingly this property again reminds me of a psychotherapeutic technique. In structural family therapy frequently so-called pre-structuring interventions are used in the first sessions (cf.[26]). They combine positive with critical views of the family relationships and are given to make family members adopt a certain definition of their situation. If they want to accept the compliment they also have to accept the negative part of the definition.

The two properties described, as well as joining, have similar intentions: making it easier for the hearer to accept something unpleasant, difficult, new; making it easier to continue with a positive response instead of a rejection, inducing the hearer to cooperate in the conversation and to talk pro-

ductively even in the face of conflict.[4]

In the end I want to return to the title of my talk. The analysis of male dominance in mixed-sex conversations - dominance which can exist in spite of women's competence and men's incompetence (about which I did not talk here) - has as purpose to rupture patriarchal discourse. Women (and men) will become more and more aware of what is going on in male-dominated discourse that surrounds us and is offered to us in the media, in politics, at the university, in public life. They will become aware of how status and power are enacted in concrete conversations, how conversational politics is performed between women and men.

But also the analysis of women's conversations, showing what is being produced there, making women aware of their competence, their supportive, cooperative, healing faculties, is rupturing the patriarchal world of talk. Women will refuse the conversational respect to men, they will refuse the conversational work in mixed-sex dialogues and instead put their energies in other places, supporting and bonding with women. And as for linguistics - I think the field could use a little revitalization by becoming feminist linguistics.

Notes

1)

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[3] (Hrsg.) Gewalt durch Sprache: Die Vergewaltigung von Frauen in Gesprächen. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Februar 1984, 4. Aufl. Juni 1985

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[5] "Sprache, Geschlecht und Macht". Linguistische Berichte 69 (1980), 1 - 14.

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[8] "Frauen und Macht in der Sprache". In: Ilse Brehmer (Hrsg.): Sexismus in der Schule. Beltz, Weinheim (1982), 189 - 201.

[9] "Gewalt durch Sprache". In: Frauen für den Frieden Basel (Hrsg.): Unsere tägliche Gewalt, Basel: Lenos Verlag, 1983

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[19] "'Es ist nicht meine Haut.': Semantik eines Fernsehgesprächs: Alice Schwarzer und Rudolf Augstein." Medium 3, (1985) 6 - 15.

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[20] "Linguistik und Psychoanalyse", Linguistische Berichte 31 (1974), pp. 41 - 46.

[21] ""Sie meinen also, Sie hätten das nicht tun sollen." : Zur Interpretation im psychotherapeutischen Dialog." Linguistische Berichte 33 (1974), pp. 18 - 26.

[22] (with Dorothea Franck) ""I'm dead".: A linguistic ana-

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4)

For a detailed discussion see [19].

ROLIG-papirer

1974

* 1. Utz Maas, Sprachtheorie
* 2. Per Aage Brandt, Om sprogets samfundsmæssighed
* 3. Lis Glebe-Møller, Ansatser til et opgør med den behavioristiske sprogundervisning

1975

* 4. Peter Harms Larsen, Papirer til 'Samtalens grammatik'
* 5. Lis Glebe-Møller, Hvilken slags fransk skal der undervises i i vore skoler?
Henning Silberbrandt, Fremmedsprogsindlæring og fagstruktur

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